

Idaho Energy Buzz

November 6, 2006

Have You Made ‘The Switch’?

By Linda Cawley, IDWR Information Specialist

It’s such an easy way to save energy, but many people haven’t made “The Switch.”

The switch to what? To Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs. It’s one of the easiest and fastest ways to save energy, and now it costs much less to make the switch than several years ago when the lights were first introduced to consumers.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, if every American home replaced just one light bulb with an Energy Star compact fluorescent bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 2.5 million homes a year and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of nearly 800,000 cars.

Compact fluorescent (cf) bulbs are four times more energy efficient than incandescent (standard) bulbs and they provide the same levels of light. They also last up to 10 times longer, so they are great to use in those hard-to-reach areas and in places where the lights are on for longer periods of time, such as the kitchen, family room or even porches or patios.

CF bulbs have also been improved so they can be used with dimmer switches, much like incandescent fixtures. Today’s CF lights offer brightness and color rendition that is comparable to incandescent lights.

If you’re unsure what size to purchase, look for a comparison table showing watts vs. lumens (the measure of light output). The higher the

lumen rating, the greater the light output. Matching the right CF light to the right kind of fixture helps ensure that it will perform properly and last a long time. To make sure you get the right CF light, read the packaging to be sure that the type you choose works for the fixture you have in mind.

If you have torchiere fixtures, consider replacing them with CF lights, which use 60-80 percent less energy than halogen lamps. They also are cooler than both incandescent and halogen fixtures, which can be a fire hazard because of their excessive heat.

Last month DOE and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency kicked off the annual “Change-a-Light, Change-the-World” campaign, which runs from Oct. 4 to Nov. 30. The campaign encourages U.S. residents to replace at least one conventional bulb or fixture in their home or workplace with one that has earned the government’s Energy Star label for energy efficiency.

Last, but not least, be sure to turn the lights off when no one is in the room. In a larger room, consider task lighting, such as lamps, instead of trying to light the entire room. If you’re not sure where to buy CF lights, they are available in most grocery stores and home improvement centers. Need more information? The Idaho Energy Division has a handy booklet packed with tips on how to save energy. Call the Idaho Energy Hotline, **1-800-334-SAVE**, and ask for your free copy.

-end-